

USDA Farm Bill Forum

November 3 2005

Good Afternoon, my name is Mark Sheffels. I am a wheat farmer from nearby Lincoln County. Today I am representing the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association. Direct seed technology offers tremendous environmental benefits and enables farmers to produce crops in a sustainable system. The cost of making the transition from conventional production to direct seed is not cheap. We know that EQUIP and CSP conservation programs will be a part of that effort.

Like all farmers, we feel the tremendous financial burden created by 25 years of increasing costs while target price reductions have coupled with inflation and stagnate crop prices to reduce commodity program support to approximately one half of what it was 25 years ago.

Policy advisors have warned growers for years to expect a shift from commodity support to conservation support because of public expectations and WTO constraints. The PNDSA is very supportive of the Conservation Security Program and we believe the public is too. However, broad agricultural industry support for this program will be difficult to gain unless congress shows the same commitment that it expects of farmers. The PNDSA offers the following recommendations to strengthen the Conservation Security Program.

- Fully fund the program per the original Congressional legislation.
- Strive for consistency in the administrative process from one watershed to another.
- Make sure requirements for soil testing are not overly micro managed as far as procedures required.
- Particular efforts are needed to insure the SCI and STIR calculations fit lower rainfall areas with limited rotation options. NRCS should work closely with Local Working Groups and Conservation Districts to insure local needs are met and all viable options for achieving sound conservation are given fair consideration.

In closing, I would like to point out that research has been the life blood of agriculture for decades. Federal support for research at our land grant universities has been flat for several decades and severely compromised by inflation. We must remedy that shortfall to prepare for the future.

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